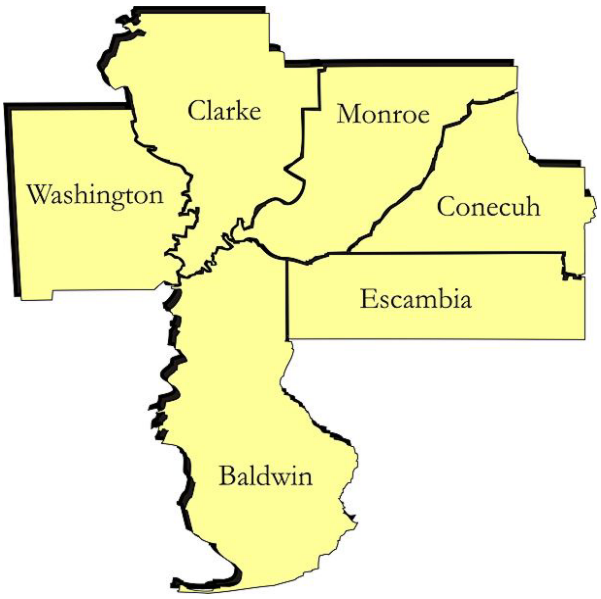
WIAA Region 9 Workforce Report



Summary

- Region 9 had a 4.3 percent unemployment rate in August 2005, with 5,260 unemployed. However, the six-county region has a roughly 32,000-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs and includes about 26,750 underemployed workers. The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer; for the one-way commute, 54 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 50 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.

- In 2000, about 23,100 residents commuted out of the region for work, compared to 12,400 in-commuters. All counties, except Clarke and Escambia, had net commuter outflows. Nearly two-thirds of the outflow was to Mobile County. Significant commuting within the region suggests that the roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers as impeded movement of workers can slow economic development.

- Educational attainment in the region is somewhat comparable to that for Alabama. Of the age 25 and over population, Alabama has 75 percent high school graduates and 19 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders, compared to 76 percent and 17 percent, respectively, for the region. Baldwin County leads with 82 percent high school graduates and 23 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders.

- Employment is currently growing faster than the labor force. More jobs might reduce commuter outflow, but also presents a challenge to workforce development. Initiatives addressing this challenge should consider (i) focusing on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth and illiterate adults), (ii) facilitating in-commuting, and (iii) helping communities gain new residents. Increasing population is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting. Hard-to-serve populations are often outside of the mainstream economy, poor, and have difficulty finding work, but are potential labor force participants. Investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap this resource.

- By sector, the top five employers in the region are manufacturing; retail trade; health care and social assistance; accommodation and food services; and educational services. These five industries provided 53,784 jobs, 61 percent of the region total in the second quarter of 2004. Two of the leading employers—manufacturing and educational services—had higher average monthly wages than the $2,433 regional average.

- On average about 5,620 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004; quarterly net job flows averaged 550. Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- Fourteen occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing. The five in highest demand are Waiters and Waitresses; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners; Registered Nurses; and Teacher Assistants. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Waiters and Waitresses; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; and Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand. The top five fast-growing occupations are Home Health Aides; Dental Assistants; Directors, Religious Activities and Education; Counter and Rental Clerks; and Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians.

- The top 50 highest earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and education fields. Of the top 10 high-earning occupations, four are in health, five are in management, and one is legal. Almost all high-earning occupations require bachelor's or higher degrees.

- Fast-growing or high-demand occupations are generally not high-earning. Of 34 selected high-demand, 39 selected fast-growing, and 50 selected high-earning occupations, only one high earning occupation, General and Operations Managers, is in the high-demand category. One occupation is both high-earning and fast-growing; Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary.

- The most relevant skills for high-demand and fast-growing occupations are basic: active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation. High-demand and high-growth occupations are also common to the leading employment sectors. Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the region's economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries.

- The finding that basic skills are important—for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs—indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills as well as enhancing these basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising. This emphasizes the need to raise educational attainment in the region and presents challenges to workforce development. It also presents opportunities for economic development through workforce development activities that involve postsecondary and higher education institutions. Higher incomes to graduates from these institutions would help to raise personal income for the region. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment for a region that has a large number of low wage jobs is an effective economic development strategy.

- A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified regional economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

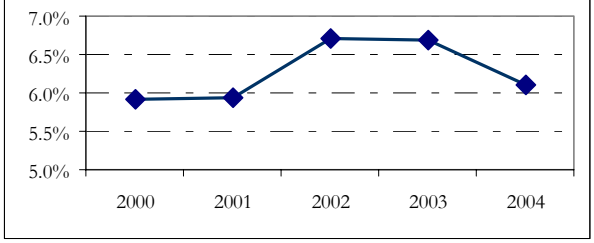
Workforce Supply

Labor Force Activity

The labor force includes all persons in the civilian noninstitutional population who are age 16 and over and who have, or are actively looking for, a job. Typically, those who have no job and are not looking for one are not included (e.g. students, retirees, and the disabled). Table 9.1 shows labor force information for Region 9 and its six counties for 2004 and August 2005. Larger increases in the number of employed residents relative to labor force size lowered unemployment in 2005 for the region and its counties. Only Baldwin County's labor force grew; Clarke and Washington counties' numbers of employed fell.

Unemployment rates in 2004 ranged from 4.8 percent to 8.8 percent for the counties, with 6.1 percent for the region. In August 2005, the unemployment range was 3.2 percent to 6.7 percent, with 4.3 percent for the region. Annual unemployment rates in the region rose to 6.7 percent in 2002, but have been falling since (Figure 9.1). Employment, the number of full-time and part-time jobs, averaged 88,450 quarterly from the second quarter of 2001 to third quarter 2004 and has been recovering since 2003 (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.1 Region 9 Unemployment Rate



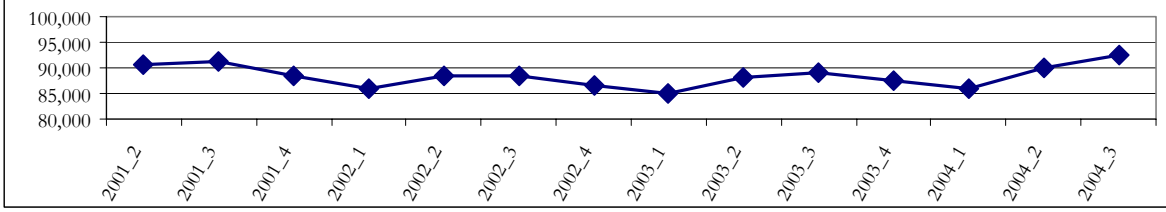
Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Table 9.1 WIAA Region 9 Labor Force Information

	2004			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Baldwin	75,026	71,423	3,603	4.80%
Clarke	10,484	9,559	925	8.82%
Conecuh	5,079	4,647	432	8.51%
Escambia	14,394	13,317	1077	7.48%
Monroe	9,768	9,039	729	7.46%
Washington	6,920	6,259	661	9.55%
WIAA Region 9	121,671	114,244	7,427	6.10%
Alabama	2,148,766	2,029,314	119,452	5.56%
U.S.	147,401,000	139,252,000	8,149,000	5.53%
	2005 August			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Baldwin	76,907	74,448	2,459	3.20%
Clarke	10,160	9,489	671	6.60%
Conecuh	5,007	4,683	324	6.47%
Escambia	14,240	13,440	800	5.62%
Monroe	9,620	9,057	563	5.85%
Washington	6,642	6,199	443	6.67%
WIAA Region 9	122,576	117,316	5,260	4.29%
Alabama	2,155,745	2,065,528	90,217	4.18%
U.S.	150,469,000	143,142,000	7,327,000	4.87%

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 9.2 WIAA Region 9 Employment



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

Commuting Patterns

In 2000, about 10,700 more people commuted out of the region for work than commuted in (Table 9.2). All counties, except Clarke and Escambia, had net commuter outflows. Nearly two-thirds of the outflow was to Mobile County. There was significant commuting within the region as well.

Table 9.2 also shows the one-way average commute time and distance for workers in 2004; the data were collected as part of a survey on underemployment. The one-way commute takes less than 20 minutes for 60 percent of resident workers; between 20 and 40 minutes for 27 percent; and more than 40 minutes for 10 percent. Two percent of workers take more than an hour.

The commute is less than 10 miles for 50 percent of workers and about 24 percent travel 10 to 25 miles. Nineteen percent of workers travel more than 25 miles one-way, with 5 percent exceeding 45 miles. This commuting data suggest that roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers so as to not slow economic development.

Table 9.2 WIAA Region 9 Commuting Patterns

Area	Inflow, 2000			Outflow, 2000	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Baldwin	6,089	49.0		16,280	70.4
Clarke	1,642	13.2		1,561	6.7
Conecuh	514	4.1		635	2.7
Escambia	2,273	18.3		1,751	7.6
Monroe	599	4.8		618	2.7
Washington	1,310	10.5		2,293	9.9
WIAA Region 9	12,427	100.0		23,138	100.0

Average commute time (one-way), 2004	Percent of workers
Less than 20 minutes	59.5
20 to 40 minutes	26.5
40 minutes to an hour	7.6
More than an hour	2.3

Average commute distance (one-way), 2004	Percent of workers
Less than 10 miles	50.4
10 to 25 miles	24.2
25 to 45 miles	14.2
More than 45 miles	5.1

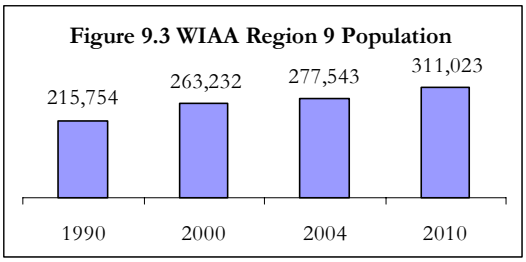
Note: Rounding errors may be present.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Population

The Region 9 population estimate of 277,543 for 2004 is 5.4 percent higher than was recorded for 2000 (Figure 9.3 and Table 9.3). Only Baldwin County's population grew. The region's population is projected to rise 18.3 percent in this decade to about 311,000 by 2010.

Baldwin County will grow the fastest, but Conecuh and Monroe will manage to stay at their 2000 levels. This region needs workers for its large and growing hospitality industry. Employment growth can reduce out-commuting. Communities that experience rapid job gains should invest in amenities and infrastructure to attract new residents. This strategy could reduce commuter burden on the region's roads.

Figure 9.3 WIAA Region 9 Population



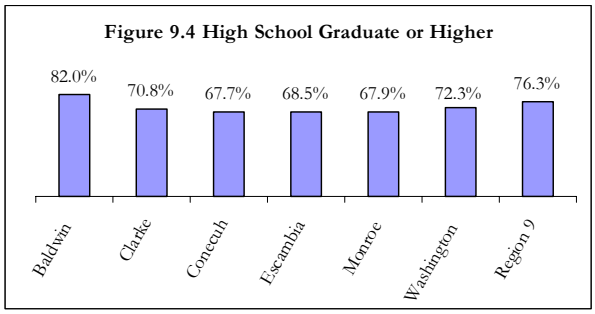
Educational Attainment

Educational attainment of Region 9 residents who are 25 years old and over is shown below in Table 9.4 and Figures 9.4 and 9.5. About 76 percent graduated from high school and 17.5 percent hold a bachelor's or higher degree. Baldwin County stands out with 82 percent high school graduates and 23 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders. Educational attainment is important as skills rise with education and high wage 21st century jobs demand more skill sets.

Table 9.3 WIAA Region 9 Population

	1990 Census	2000 Census	2004 Estimate	% Change 2000-2004	2010 Projected	% Change 2000-2010
Baldwin	98,280	140,415	156,701	11.6	184,375	31.3
Clarke	27,240	27,867	27,422	-1.6	28,450	2.1
Conecuh	14,054	14,089	13,453	-4.5	14,133	0.3
Escambia	35,518	38,440	38,336	-0.3	40,502	5.4
Monroe	23,968	24,324	23,725	-2.5	24,424	0.4
Washington	16,694	18,097	17,906	-1.1	19,139	5.8
WIAA Region 9	215,754	263,232	277,543	5.4	311,023	18.2
Alabama	4,040,587	4,447,100	4,530,182	1.9	4,838,812	8.8
U.S.	248,709,873	281,421,966	296,655,404	5.4	314,571,000	11.8

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.



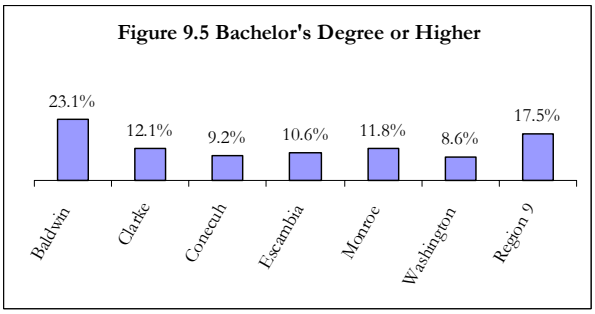


Table 9.4 Educational Attainment in 2000, Population 25 Years and Over

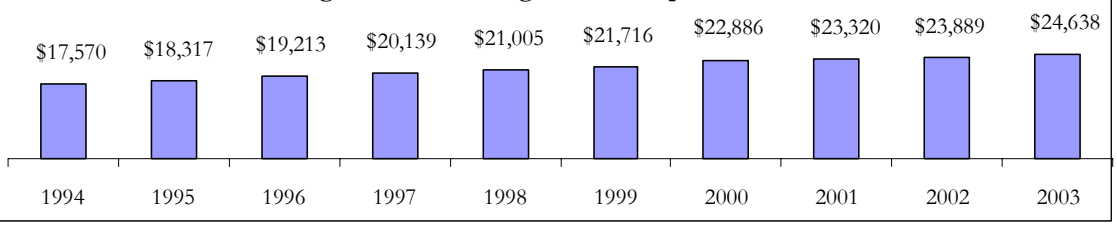
	Baldwin	Clarke	Conecuh	Escambia	Monroe	Washington	Region 9
Total	96,010	17,702	9,230	25,510	15,378	11,240	175,070
No schooling completed	590	209	260	366	356	193	1,974
Nursery to 4th grade	330	178	150	214	183	92	1,147
5th and 6th grade	984	565	311	676	406	350	3,292
7th and 8th grade	2,293	782	412	1,313	771	578	6,149
9th grade	2,818	696	387	1,281	632	412	6,226
10th grade	3,327	891	451	1,547	998	407	7,621
11th grade	3,229	876	452	1,316	726	590	7,189
12th grade, no diploma	3,687	968	561	1,317	867	490	7,890
High school graduate/equivalent	28,428	6,667	3,518	8,860	5,285	4,904	57,662
Some college, less than 1yr	6,458	948	570	1,843	842	601	11,262
Some college, 1+ yrs, no degree	15,998	1,939	974	2,692	1,787	1,141	24,531
Associate degree	5,722	846	333	1,392	712	513	9,518
Bachelor's degree	14,225	1,343	587	1,691	1,122	627	19,595
Master's degree	5,682	556	184	736	507	241	7,906
Professional school degree	1,553	210	59	221	110	94	2,247
Doctorate degree	686	28	21	45	74	7	861

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

Per Capita Income

Per capita income (PCI) in Region 9 was $24,638 in 2003 (Figure 9.6), 40 percent higher than in 1994, and $1,867 or 7 percent less than the Alabama average of $26,505. Baldwin County had the highest PCI with $27,945 and was the only county whose PCI was above the state average. Washington County had the lowest PCI with $19,157.

Figure 9.6 WIAA Region 9 Per Capita Income



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Underemployment and Available Labor

Labor force data are often limited to information on the employed and the unemployed that is available from government sources. However, this information is not complete from the perspective of employers. New or expanding employers are also interested in underemployment because current workers are potential employees. In fact, experience requirements in job ads are evidence that many prospective employers look beyond the unemployed for workers.

Workers in occupations that underutilize their experience, training, and skills are underemployed. These workers might look for other work because their current earnings are below what they believe they can get or because they wish to not be underemployed. Underemployment occurs for various reasons including (i) productivity growth, (ii) spousal employment and income, and (iii) family constraints or personal preferences. The various contributing factors combined with economic, social, and geographic characteristics of areas make underemployment unique to areas.

The existence of underemployment identifies economic potential that is not being realized. It is extremely difficult to measure this economic potential because of uncertainties regarding additional income that the underemployed can bring to an area. It is clear, however, that underemployment provides opportunities for selective job creation and economic growth. A business that needs skills prevalent among the underemployed could locate in WIAAs with such workers regardless of those areas' unemployment rates. A low unemployment rate, which may falsely suggest limited labor availability, is not a hindrance to the business.

The underemployed present a significant pool of labor because they tend to respond to job opportunities that they believe are better for reasons that include (i) higher income, (ii) better benefits, (iii) better terms and conditions of employment, and (iv) better match with skills, training,

and experience. The underemployed also create opportunities for entry level workers as they leave lower-paying jobs for better-paying ones. Even if their previously held positions are lost or not filled (perhaps due to low unemployment), there is economic growth in gaining higher-paying jobs. Such income growth boosts consumption, savings, and tax collections. Quantifying the size of the underemployed is a necessary first step in exploiting it for economic development, workforce training, planning, and other uses.

WIAA Region 9 had an underemployment rate of 22.8 percent in 2004. Applying this rate to August 2005 labor force data means that about 26,750 employed residents were underemployed (Table 9.5). Adding the unemployed gives a total available labor pool of about 32,000 for the region. This pool is roughly six times the number of unemployed and is a more realistic measure of the available labor in the region. However, prospective employers must be prepared to offer the underemployed higher wages, better terms of employment, or some other incentives to induce them to change jobs. Underemployment ranged from 14.7 percent for Baldwin County to 31.7 percent for Conecuh. Baldwin County has the largest available labor and Conecuh has the smallest.

Table 9.5 Available Labor in WIAA Region 9

	Region 9	Baldwin	Clarke	Conecuh	Escambia	Monroe	Washington
Labor Force	122,576	76,907	10,160	5,007	14,240	9,620	6,642
Employed	117,316	74,448	9,489	4,683	13,440	9,057	6,199
Underemployment rate	22.8%	14.7%	22.2%	31.7%	22.6%	20.0%	30.5%
Underemployed workers	26,748	10,944	2,107	1,485	3,037	1,811	1,891
Unemployed	5,260	2459	671	324	800	563	443
Available labor pool	**32,008**	**13,403**	**2,778**	**1,809**	**3,837**	**2,374**	**2,334**

Note: Rounding errors may be present. Based on August 2005 labor force data and 2004 underemployment rates.
Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Workforce Demand

Industry Mix

The manufacturing sector was the leading employer with nearly 15,900 jobs in the second quarter of 2004 (Table 9.6). The rest of the top five industries by employment are retail trade; health care and social assistance; accommodation and food services; and educational services. These five industries provided 53,784 jobs, 61 percent of the region total. The average monthly wage across all industries in the region was $2,433. Two of the leading employers—manufacturing and educational services—paid more than this average. The highest average monthly wages were for wholesale trade ($3,743), mining ($3,698), and manufacturing ($3,339). Accommodation and food services paid the least at $1,210. Mining had the highest average monthly new hire wages with $2,416, followed by wholesale trade with $2,398. Accommodation and food services paid the least average monthly new hire wages with $901.

By broad industry classification, service producing industries provided about 68 percent of all covered jobs in the region in second quarter 2004 (Figure 9.7). Goods producing industries were next with 26 percent and public administration had 6 percent.

Figure 9.7 WIAA Region 9 Employment Distribution

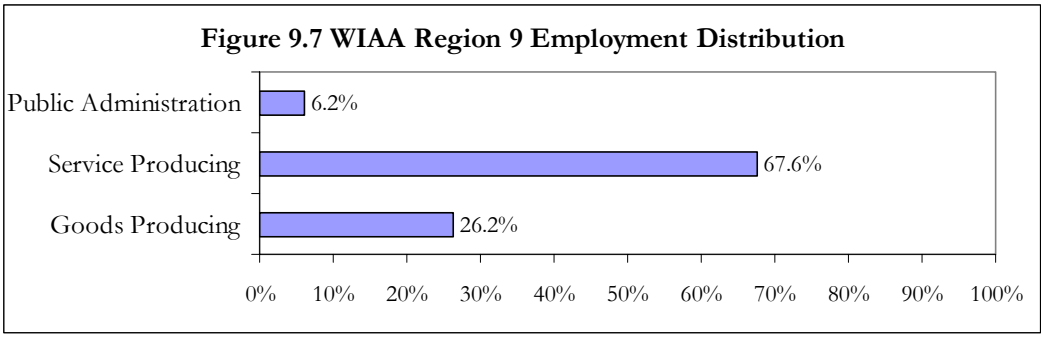


Table 9.6 Industry Mix (2nd Quarter 2004)

Industry by 2-digit NAICS Code	Total Employment	Share	Rank	Average Monthly Wage	Average Monthly New Hire Earnings
11 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2,121	2.40%	13	$2,400	$1,856
21 Mining	221	0.25%	20	$3,698	$2,416
22 Utilities	1,205	1.37%	17	$3,311	$1,827
23 Construction	4,870	5.52%	7	$2,553	$1,988
31-33 Manufacturing	15,898	18.02%	1	$3,339	$2,164
42 Wholesale Trade	3,058	3.47%	9	$3,743	$2,398
44-45 Retail Trade	12,647	14.34%	2	$1,779	$1,290
48-49 Transportation and Warehousing	3,421	3.88%	8	$2,737	$2,314
51 Information	1,483	1.68%	16	$2,441	$1,581
52 Finance and Insurance	2,374	2.69%	11	$3,050	$2,242
53 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,041	2.31%	14	$2,051	$1,499
54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,844	2.09%	15	$2,954	$1,957
55 Management of Companies and Enterprises	248	0.28%	19	$2,705	$1,905
56 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	2,735	3.10%	10	$1,922	$1,427
61 Educational Services	7,810	8.85%	5	$2,541	$1,505
62 Health Care and Social Assistance	8,910	10.10%	3	$2,340	$1,637
71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,146	1.30%	18	$1,517	$1,213
72 Accommodation and Food Services	8,519	9.66%	4	$1,210	$901
81 Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,219	2.52%	12	$1,694	$1,359
92 Public Administration	5,439	6.17%	6	$2,388	$1,529
ALL INDUSTRIES	88,209	100.00%		$2,433	

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

Job Creation and Net Job Flows

On average, about 5,620 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004 (Figure 9.8). Quarterly net job flows averaged 550 in the same period (Figure 9.9). Net job flows have ranged from a loss of 2,700 to a gain of about 3,400. Job creation refers to the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through the expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

Figure 9.8 Job Creation in WIAA Region 9

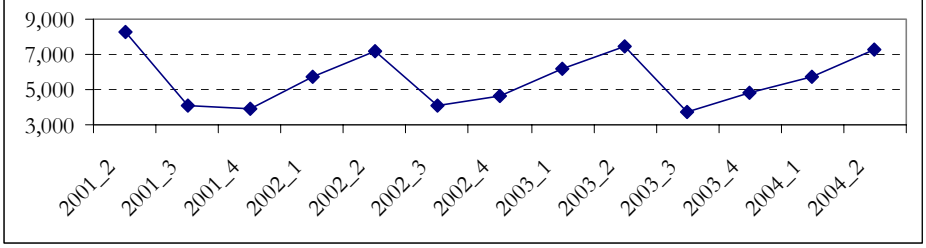
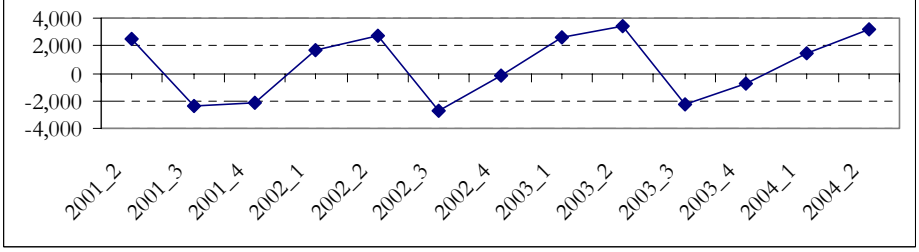


Figure 9.9 WIAA Region 9 Net Job Flows



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

High-Demand Occupations

Table 9.7 shows the top 34 of about 440 occupations ranked by projected demand for jobs. Many of these occupations are common to the region's top five employment sectors: manufacturing; retail trade; health care and social assistance; accommodation and food services; and educational services. Thus these sectors will continue to dominate employment in the region. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Waiters and Waitresses; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; and Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand.

Table 9.7 Selected High-Demand Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Annual Average Job Openings		
	Total	Due to Growth	Due to Separations
Cashiers	290	70	220
Retail Salespersons	250	75	175
Waiters and Waitresses**	235	75	160
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers**	170	65	105
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	105	20	85
General and Operations Managers	85	40	45
Office Clerks, General	85	30	55
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners**	85	55	30
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	80	25	55
Registered Nurses**	75	45	30
Teacher Assistants**	75	45	30
First-Line Supervisors/Managers, Retail Sales	70	35	35
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers**	65	35	30
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants**	65	45	20
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids	65	35	30
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	65	30	35
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	60	35	25
Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	60	20	40
Child Care Workers	55	25	30
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	50	25	25
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	50	25	25
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses**	45	25	20
Cooks, Restaurant	45	20	25
Sales Representatives, Except Technical and Scientific Products	40	20	20
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	40	25	15
Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	40	15	25
Security Guards**	35	20	15
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	35	15	20
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers	35	15	20
Customer Service Representatives	35	15	20
Counter and Rental Clerks**	30	15	15
First-Line Supervisors/Managers, Food Preparation	30	15	15
Accountants and Auditors	30	15	15
Food Preparation Workers**	30	15	15

Note: A minimum of 30 average annual job openings is used as selection criterion and data are rounded to nearest 5.
** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.
*** The data for these occupations are confidential using Bureau of Labor Statistics standards.
Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Fast-Growing Occupations

The 39 fastest growing occupations ranked by projected growth of employment are listed in Table 9.8. The top five fast-growing occupations are Home Health Aides; Dental Assistants; Directors, Religious Activities and Education; Counter and Rental Clerks; and Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians. Fourteen occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing. The five in highest demand are Waiters and Waitresses; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners; Registered Nurses; and Teacher Assistants.

Table 9.8 Selected Fast-Growing Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Employment 2002	Employment 2012	Percent Change	Annual Growth (Percent)	Total Annual Average Job Openings
Home Health Aides	300	520	73.3	5.65	25
Dental Assistants	170	270	58.8	4.73	15
Directors, Religious Activities and Education	190	290	52.6	4.32	10
Counter and Rental Clerks**	340	510	50.0	4.14	30
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	***	***	***	***	***
Surgeons	***	***	***	***	***
Emergency Medical Tech. and Paramedics	***	***	***	***	***
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	200	290	45.0	3.79	15
Helpers--Electricians	70	100	42.9	3.63	10
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants**	1,060	1,510	42.5	3.60	65
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	260	370	42.3	3.59	15
Clergy	380	540	42.1	3.58	25
Amusement and Recreation Attendants	190	270	42.1	3.58	15
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	580	810	39.7	3.40	40
Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	180	250	38.9	3.34	10
Sheet Metal Workers	130	180	38.5	3.31	10
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses**	690	940	36.2	3.14	45
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners**	1,530	2,080	35.9	3.12	85
Food Preparation Workers**	420	570	35.7	3.10	30
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	280	380	35.7	3.10	25
Social and Human Service Assistants	280	380	35.7	3.10	15
Special Education Teachers, Preschool, Kindergarten, and Elementary School	140	190	35.7	3.10	10
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	710	960	35.2	3.06	50
Bus Drivers, School	400	540	35.0	3.05	25
Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	260	350	34.6	3.02	15
Recreation Workers	290	390	34.5	3.01	15
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education**	1,080	1,450	34.3	2.99	60
Teacher Assistants**	1,350	1,810	34.1	2.98	75
Middle School Teachers, Except Special Education	500	670	34.0	2.97	25
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Housekeeping and Janitorial Workers	150	200	33.3	2.92	10
Medical Secretaries	150	200	33.3	2.92	10
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	190	250	31.6	2.78	10
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	160	210	31.3	2.76	10
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Personal Service Workers	160	210	31.3	2.76	10
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers**	1,160	1,510	30.2	2.67	65
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers**	2,130	2,770	30.0	2.66	170
Registered Nurses**	1,500	1,950	30.0	2.66	75
Security Guards**	580	750	29.3	2.60	35
Waiters and Waitresses**	2,600	3,360	29.2	2.60	235

Note: Selection criterion is annual growth rate of at least 2.6 percent. Employment level data are rounded to the nearest 10 and job openings data are rounded to the nearest 5. ** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.
*** The data for these occupations are confidential using Bureau of Labor Statistics standards.
Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

High-Earning Occupations

Any discussion of earnings must consider that wages vary with experience. Occupations with the highest entry wages may not necessarily have the highest average or experienced wages. Table 9.9 shows 50 selected highest earning occupations in the region. These high-earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and education fields. They are generally not fast-growing or high-demand. Of the top 10, four are in health, five are in management, and one is legal. One occupation, General and Operations Managers, is both high-earning and high-demand. One occupation is both high-earning and fast-growing; Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary.

Table 9.9 Selected High-Earning Occupations

Occupation	Mean Annual Salary ($)
Family and General Practitioners	146,370
Pediatricians, General	144,581
Podiatrists	142,667
Chief Executives	135,304
Dentists, General	134,410
Lawyers	106,933
Engineering Managers	96,200
Natural Sciences Managers	88,795
General and Operations Managers	85,821
Pharmacists	83,075
Chiropractors	82,514
Optometrists	81,806
Real Estate Brokers	81,723
Computer and Information Systems Managers	81,078
Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	80,930
Marketing Managers	79,435
Sales Managers	78,957
Electronics Engineers, Except Computer	78,686
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	78,458
Environmental Engineers	76,960
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software	76,794
Chemical Engineers	76,502
Financial Managers	76,003
Materials Engineers	73,382
Medical and Health Services Managers	72,925
Electrical Engineers	72,904
Purchasing Managers	72,488
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	71,698
Mechanical Engineers	70,221
Education Administrators, Postsecondary	69,618
Industrial Production Managers	69,056
Management Analysts	68,806
Veterinarians	68,619
Construction Managers	67,163
Computer Programmers	66,789
Computer Systems Analysts	65,250
Industrial Engineers	65,125
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	64,979
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	64,480
Health and Safety Engineers, Except Mining Safety Engineers and Inspectors	63,502
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	63,253
Civil Engineers	63,190
Business Teachers, Postsecondary	63,170
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Non-Retail Sales Workers	63,149
Economists	62,005
Physical Therapists	61,714
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	61,630
Landscape Architects	60,965
Public Relations Managers	60,944
Broadcast News Analysts	60,944

Note: The list of occupations is specific to the region, but earnings are statewide. Only the 50 highest earning single occupations are presented. The list does not include occupations that are affected by confidentiality. Some high-earning occupational groups are not listed because earnings can vary considerably for occupations within these groups. Employment data are rounded to the nearest 10. The data provided are based on the November 2004 release of the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) combined employment and wage file. Estimates for specific occupations may include imputed data.

"NA" indicates data items that are not publishable or not available.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Other Workforce Issues

Available Labor

The availability of labor is critical to economic development. WIAA Region 9 currently has a low unemployment rate, but it also has a 32,000-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs, typically higher-wage ones. This pool includes about 26,750 underemployed workers who are willing to commute farther and longer; 54 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 50 percent for 20 or more extra miles.

Low wages at the available jobs, lack of job opportunities in their areas, and living too far from jobs are the primary reasons given for being underemployed. Retirement and disability are the primary reasons given for not working, but a lack of job opportunities is also frequently cited. Some nonworkers may become part of the labor force if their problems can be addressed. Economic development efforts should take these factors into consideration.

Employment is currently growing faster than the labor force. Higher employment demand could reduce commuter outflow, but also presents communities with opportunities to attract new residents. Some communities must be prepared to invest in amenities and infrastructure to support such growth because immigration is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting.

Immigration is one way of growing the labor force through growth in the population. The region's population growth rate is expected to be faster than the state's rate through 2010, mainly because of Baldwin County. Another strategy to expand the labor force to meet possible increases in employment demand is to raise labor force participation by focusing on hard-to-serve populations, which include persons in poverty, those receiving welfare, those in sparsely populated areas, those on active parole, and out-of-school youth. These people are often outside of the mainstream economy and poor. They usually have difficulty finding work because they have low levels of educational attainment, lack occupational skills, or face geographic or other barriers. Some investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap these potential workers.

Skills

Jobs require skill sets and it is necessary that jobholders have the relevant skills. High earning occupations typically require more complex skills, which are obtained in the pursuit of the high educational attainment levels that such jobs require. Low earning occupations require fewer and more basic skill sets; some low earning occupations have no minimum skill set requirements (e.g. dishwashers and maids).

Table 9.10 shows the percentage of selected occupations in WIAA Region 9 that list a particular skill as primary. We define a primary skill as one in the top 10 of the required skill set for an occupation. O*NET Online provides skill sets for all occupations ranked by the degree of importance. Thus primary skills are more important than other skills. It is important to note that a particular skill may be more important and more extensively used in one occupation than another. Table 9.10 does not address such cross-occupational skill importance comparisons.

In general, basic skills are most frequently listed as primary. Science and critical thinking skills are primary for more selected high-earning occupations than selected fast-growing and selected high-demand occupations. A similar pattern holds for complex problem solving, resource management, and systems skills; these skills require longer training periods and postsecondary education. The region's high-demand and high-growth occupations are dominated by those for which the most relevant skills are active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation.

Table 9.10 Share of Selected Occupations for Which Skill Is Primary

	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
Basic Skills			
Active Learning	35%	33%	70%
Active Listening	85%	85%	84%
Critical Thinking	59%	56%	92%
Learning Strategies	35%	38%	14%
Mathematics	29%	15%	34%
Monitoring	44%	41%	32%
Reading Comprehension	79%	85%	96%
Science	0%	3%	32%
Speaking	74%	85%	68%
Writing	38%	49%	42%
Complex Problem Solving Skills			
Complex Problem Solving	3%	3%	46%
Resource Management Skills			
Management of Financial Resources	3%	0%	14%
Management of Material Resources	3%	0%	4%
Management of Personnel Resources	12%	10%	14%
Time Management	53%	54%	56%
Social Skills			
Coordination	32%	38%	36%
Instructing	41%	64%	24%
Negotiation	6%	0%	16%
Persuasion	6%	0%	16%
Service Orientation	41%	46%	12%
Social Perceptiveness	53%	67%	16%
Systems Skills			
Judgment and Decision Making	18%	18%	66%
Systems Analysis	0%	0%	14%
Systems Evaluation	3%	3%	18%
Technical Skills			
Equipment Maintenance	12%	13%	0%
Equipment Selection	12%	15%	8%
Installation	9%	10%	0%
Operation and Control	6%	5%	0%
Operation Monitoring	6%	8%	0%
Operations Analysis	0%	0%	20%
Programming	0%	0%	6%
Quality Control Analysis	0%	3%	4%
Repairing	9%	5%	0%
Technology Design	0%	0%	14%
Troubleshooting	9%	8%	14%

Note: Definitions for skill types and skills are available at http://online.onetcenter.org/skills/

Source: O*NET Online and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Education and Training Issues

Educational attainment in WIAA Region 9 is somewhat comparable to that of the state. Seventy-six percent of residents age 25 and over have graduated from high school and 17.5 percent have a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 75 percent and 19 percent, respectively, for Alabama. Baldwin County stands out with 82 percent high school graduates and 23 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders. Education and skill requirements for jobs keep rising and emphasize a very strong need to raise educational attainment in the region.

Table 9.11 shows the number of selected occupations in the region for which a particular education/training category is most common. In general, high-earning occupations typically require a bachelor's or higher degree. Most of the high-demand jobs do not require postsecondary training; some form of on-the-job training is the minimum requirement. About 25 percent of fast-growing occupations require a bachelor's or higher degree. The challenge for the region is that future high-demand jobs are likely to require some postsecondary education and training.

Table 9.11 Number of Selected Occupations with Most Common Education/Training Requirement

Most Common Education/Training Requirements Categories	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
First Professional Degree		2	9
Doctoral Degree			1
Master's Degree			4
Work Experience Plus a Bachelor's or Higher Degree	1	1	14
Bachelor's Degree	3	7	17
Associate Degree	1	2	
Postsecondary Vocational Training	2	6	
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	3	2	3
Long-term On-the-job Training	1	1	1
Moderate On-the-job Training	7	3	1
Short-term On-the-job Training	16	15	

Note: The last three education and training requirements categories are based on the length of time it generally takes an average worker to achieve proficiency for occupations in which postsecondary training is usually not needed for entry. **Long-term** requires more than 12 months on-the-job training that can include up to four years of apprenticeship, formal classroom instruction, and short-term employer-sponsored training. Trainees are generally considered to be employed in the occupation. **Moderate-term** requires one to 12 months on-the-job experience and informal training. **Short-term** requires up to one month on-the-job experience and training.

Source: O*NET Online; Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama; and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

The finding that basic skills are important for all the selected occupations (Table 9.10) indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skill types while enhancing basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can point out the skill needs of the future and any existing gaps.

High-earning occupations make up a small component of total employment and jobs offered by top employers in the region. Diversifying the region's economy would strengthen it. Economic development should also focus on retaining, expanding, and attracting businesses that provide more

high-earning jobs. Workforce development should pay attention to postsecondary and higher educational systems to ensure a ready and available workforce for these businesses. The higher incomes to graduates of these institutions would help raise personal income for the region. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment and technological skills is an effective economic development strategy.

A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified regional economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

Regional Advisory Council Annual Report: Implications for Action

The material in this section is from the July 2005 Annual Report of the Region 9 Workforce Development Regional Advisory Council. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the direct contributors to this workforce report.

Action issue 1. Where must education and training opportunities be advanced or marketed to meet the demands of critical skills/worker shortages and high-growth occupations in the region?

The highest growth sectors are retail and hospitality, followed closely by construction. The first two need a ready pool of workers with good interpersonal skills and attitude, the willingness to come to work every day, and the ability to afford to live on the wages paid by those sectors. Construction workers on major projects are often imported from other parts of the country specifically for each project; encouraging those workers to stay here is one route to solving the construction labor shortage. Another is to continue and expand the program piloted last year as a joint venture between Faulkner State Community College, the CareerLink centers, DHR, and Baldwin schools to provide basic carpentry and workplace safety skills to unskilled workers.

Action issue 2. How can/should worker skills be generally upgraded in the region?

It is not very difficult to identify needs in specific industry sectors—for example: nursing, aircraft mechanics, IT, machinists—and to develop specific partnerships and training programs to address these. It is more difficult to instill a work ethic and a good work attitude in people who perhaps grew up in an environment that did not emphasize this. FIT gets at some of this, but people need a strong incentive to actually commit the time it takes to get through this. Faulkner State CC has a great remediation program but not enough people who should be in it sign up or stay in it.

Action issue 3. How can future workers be helped to make better choices about career preparation (high school, youth/young adults age 18-26, adults, dislocated workers)?

This advisory council felt very strongly that we are not doing all that we should be doing in this regard in the K-12 system, that there is a disconnect between K-12 and business. Counseling on what you do after high school needs to be an industry-led activity. We need to find ways to be present in our middle schools and high schools as business people. Junior Achievement, Career Technology Advisory Councils, FBLA, and DECA are traditional routes to this. We need to be proactive with our school system superintendents and staff to find other ways.

Action issue 4. Should worker assessment and credentialing be increased in the region (pre-service and in-service training)?

Reaction of employers in the region is generally positive toward the concept of pre-service credentialing. If a job applicant were to show up with a certificate in hand and willingness to work, they'd be happy to hire him or her! The carpentry skills pilot program seemed to work well, but they did not believe that most of the applicants that they had been rejecting would actually go to pre-service training, at least for entry or general labor types of positions in this region. On the other hand, in-service incumbent worker training has been very well received and is broadly used for training in lean manufacturing or quality certifications. Employers who have used this enthusiastically endorse continuing the program and working to let more companies know about it.

Action issue 5. What roles should be played by the various stakeholder groups (employers, partner agencies, elected officials, faith-based/community-based organizations, Workforce Investment Board members, grantor agencies, news media, vendors/contractors) at the local, regional, state and federal levels in implementing the action steps outlined above?

It has also become apparent that DHR can be a very good partner in workforce recruiting and retention. DHR has access to funds that can be used to help some applicants and/or employees get to and from work, find child- or adult-care facilities, and so forth.

Other Regional Workforce Development Problems, Issues and Concerns. Because of the huge demand for workers in hospitality and retail sectors coming from the growth discussed above, we need to find a way to partner and recruit workers for these segments as well as for industrial sector general laborer jobs from outside of our region, or perhaps from outside of our state. This implies that we also need to have a plan for affordable housing and mass transit. Envision Coastal Alabama is currently working on some of this for Mobile, Baldwin, and Escambia counties, but we do not have a process to plan with all Region 9 counties involved.